

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

and of John R. Rice

"And they cried, The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Judges 7:20.

An Independent Religious Weekly, Standing for the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, His Blood Atonement, Salvation by Faith, New Testament Soul Winning and the Premillennial Return of Christ. Opposes Sin, Modernism, and Denominational Overlordship

VOLUME IV, No. 43

DALLAS TEXAS, FRIDAY, MAY 13, 1938

Office: 201 East Tenth St., Phone 6-6888

MANY SAVED MOTHER'S DAY IN DALLAS

These words are dictated Sunday afternoon. I awoke at 6 o'clock this morning. At 7:30 I was at the radio for *The Gospel Half Hour*, and preached on Jezebel, the mother who was a curse to her son. Before 9 o'clock I was at the church. At 9:30 services began with a large class of men and women present, and I taught them for a solid hour. Then we entered into the big 11 o'clock service, gave Bibles to the youngest mother, to three mothers who tied in having the largest number of children present, six each, and gave a large print New Testament and Psalms to the oldest mother present, who was eighty-five years old, and gave a doll to the youngest baby, two months old. The youngest mother was eighteen. A very large crowd was present. The Spirit of God moved all our hearts. The pastor preached on the subject, *Mother, Home and Heaven*. It was a very plain, sharp message, urging women to put God first. Then we called upon women who would rededicate themselves, particularly mothers to rededicate themselves to the Lord, put Christ first and live for Him. With tears, with confessions, with earnest requests for prayer, the mothers came, scores and scores of them. Before that was over, a grown man came weeping to confess Christ, and said:

"I take Christ as my Saviour right now. I am going to meet my mother in Heaven!"

Then we extended the invitation to lost people. First, a grown woman, the mother of several children came trusting Christ, then a grown young man, then a young wife, then her husband, and so it went on. Eight or ten trusted Christ as Saviour and several others came as backsliders to renew their covenant with God. One dear woman who had used her own car and borrowed her son's car to bring two carloads of new people to the services, and had three of them, I believe, trust Christ in the services, shouted aloud the praises of God and rejoiced in answered prayer!

Some joined the church, one girl was baptized at the close of the morning service.

This afternoon we had services in the jail from 3 until 5 o'clock. I spoke twice, a young preacher spoke once. Twenty-eight people were with us to give their testimony and to sing. There were a number of professions of faith in Christ, tears, earnest requests for prayers. God was with us.

Now the men's prayer meeting is meeting. We expect a great time of blessing tonight.

In the big service Sunday night at the Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle, Brother Rice preached on *Fathers* and gave Bible examples of three fathers, Lot, Joshua, and the jailer at Philippi who got his whole family saved. Rev. George Wilson, a full-blooded Sioux Indian and three of his children sang before the sermon, and then sang again at the close while we waited for the baptizing. In the invitation, four came to join the church, three of them for baptism, and two other men were happily saved, one of them coming out boldly to claim the Lord publicly. The other did not make his decision until after the meeting was dismissed.

BOOKS FOR PREACHERS

SERMONS

Preachers need preaching to. Send as a rich treat to the preacher who wants his heart warmed and his soul stirred *As Jesus Passed By*, by Evangelist Gipsy Smith. For sixty years this saintly man of God, born in a Gipsy tent, has been carrying the gospel to unnumbered thousands. I was prejudiced against him, but when I heard him, his tears, his fervency, his passion for sinners, and the manifest blessing in hundreds of conversions, won my heart. These sermons will stir you and bless you and make a better preacher of you. 224 pages, price \$1.50. 15c postage. The book is cloth bound of course.

Revival Lectures by the famed and blessed evangelist of another day, Charles G. Finney. The two hundred thousand souls he won to Christ in a few short years stirred America. These revival lectures show how to have a revival. It shows the price to be paid, the messages to be used, the kind of preaching to do, the themes which will bring conviction. It will show how to condemn sin, how to hold crowds, how to bring decision. Multiplied thousands of preachers have been fired for revival efforts by these messages. We praise the Lord it has been reprinted. Cloth bound, 468 pages, price \$2.00, add 15c postage.

Sermons by Spurgeon. Who can preach like the immortal Spurgeon? We have several different volumes of sermons by Spurgeon as follows:

Twelve Sermons on Prayer

John R. Rice At World's Christian Fundamentals Ass'n., Waterloo, Iowa

By Elizabeth J. Ridgeway

Dr. Rice left Sunday night after the services for the World's Christian Fundamentals Association which meets in the Walnut Street Baptist Church at Waterloo, Iowa, from May 8th to the 15th.

On the program are Dr. W. B. Riley of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dr. R. G. Lee of Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Dan Gilbert, author of "Crucifying Christ In Our Colleges," and other books, Dr. Paul Rood, president of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, is president of Los Angeles Bible Institute, Dr. Walter Lewis Wilson, and other prominent fundamentalists from all over the world.

Dr. Rice expects to come back and spend some time with Dr. Walter Lewis Wilson at the Keswick Convention in Kansas City the following week, the 15th to the 22nd. He will be home, the Lord willing, Wednesday, May 18th.

Twelve Sermons on Decision
Twelve Sermons on the Holy Spirit

Twelve Sermons on Resurrection
Twelve Sermons on Holiness
Twelve Sermons on the Death and Passion of Christ
Twelve Striking Sermons
Limp, linen cover, about 152 pages each, price 50c, each volume. The whole set of seven books for \$3.00. Postage 25c for all seven.

BIOGRAPHIES

The Shadow of the Broad Brim. A remarkable life story of Spurgeon, the most popular in modern times, and the newest, written by Dr. Richard Ellsworth Day. The family background, conversion, call to the ministry, and prodigious labors of this mighty man of God. What God did with Spurgeon, to him and through him will move your heart, make you long to be a
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Dr. Zabriskie Here Next Sunday

We are happy to announce that our dear friend and brother, Dr. Howard C. Zabriskie of Providence, Rhode Island, will be with us to speak next Sunday. Some time ago we learned that he was to be in Dallas to take the last examination for his Doctor's degree at the Dallas Theological Seminary. He is pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, and God is blessing his work there. He will bring the messages at both the morning and evening hours. Let us expect great blessings, and particularly bring unsaved people to see them saved Sunday night. Sunday morning Dr. Zabriskie will speak on "Ambassadors for Christ," and Sunday night on "What Must I Do to Be Happy?"



DR. HOWARD C. ZABRISKIE of Providence, Rhode Island, who will speak Sunday morning and night at the Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle, Dallas.

Texas Baptist Preachers, Greetings!

Hundreds of Baptist preachers in Texas will receive this issue of *The Sword of the Lord* for the first time. Others will be getting their second or third issue. Friends of yours and friends of *The Sword of the Lord* have subscribed for you for a trial subscription! You will receive the paper for thirteen weeks. We trust that you may find something helpful or suggestive or inspirational. We covet your prayers. We want your fellowship in the Lord.

Coming soon will be an article on *Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures*, another on *The Bible and Booze*, and other Bible teaching and evangelistic messages.

We hear almost every week from somebody saved through the messages in *The Sword of the Lord*.

We welcome suggestions from our preacher friends. Please pray for us. If a message is helpful to you, help us get it into the hands of others who need it. This work is carried on in the name of the Lord Jesus with a love for all who love Him, earnestly striving to carry the gospel to every creature as Christ commanded.

New readers, we greet you and say, God bless you!

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Now that is awfully important. What is the most important word in that entire sentence? You may have guessed it. Let's see if you did. The most important word is *first*. "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God." Everybody in the world does that if you leave out that word *first*. Everybody in the world can say "yes" to that verse, and every Christian does, except that one word, *first*. Even lost people in some sense seek the kingdom of God if you leave off that word *first*. You ask a lost man if he loves God and he will say "Yes." But of course he isn't telling the truth. He doesn't love God, he never believed in God, never trusted God. But he is more or less honest in his expectation at least. Every drunkard wishes he could be sober sometimes. He didn't want to be a drunkard. Every thief wishes he could be honest. He feels, "Well, when I get to where people will give me a fair start, and I get a good job, and have money, I am not going to be a thief." Everybody likes morality and righteousness, and so everybody in the world would be willing to seek the kingdom of God, but they don't want to seek it *first*. The most important word in that verse is *first*.

Glory In First Things

There is glory in the first things. There is the first baby. Oh, the first baby! I talked to a mother on the telephone last night and she was telling me about her baby, and of course I had to talk about my baby, too. She told me how much the little one weighed and how he was getting along. It was her first baby. My wife said that the way to a mother's heart is through her baby. And she asked about our baby. I was interested in her's because she was interested in mine. There is a freshness about the first baby. Isn't there glory around the first child? You mothers and fathers remember when
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

"CHRIST---FIRST OR SECOND?"

(Sermon preached Sunday morning, April 24th, 1938, at Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle by Dr. John R. Rice. — Stenographically reported.)

I am going to speak on an old text because I have got to have a text, but I am going to preach an entirely new sermon. Every preacher ought to have a text when he starts out, so let's start with Matthew 6:33, and we will go all around over the Bible in preaching on it. The truth is, I didn't know what verse to begin on, but you are supposed to have some place as a text when you go to preach so I will start with this one. Suppose we begin to read with verse twenty-five and following:

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

"26. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;

yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

"27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"

"28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

"29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

"31. Therefore take no thought,

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saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

"32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

You are thinking about something to eat and about clothes. Heathens do that. You are no better than heathens if that is what your mind is on for "after all these things do the Gentiles seek." Don't you think God knows your need for clothes or food? And now verse 33:

"33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Now let's take verse thirty-three and memorize it. Everybody read it together. You had better repeat where it is so you will know where to find it. Matthew 6:33:

"CHRIST -- FIRST OR SECOND?"

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

God gave you that first baby! How precious it was! It was the brightest little thing! Do you remember that?

My brother Bill has a lovely baby. Bill told me, "Now look here, John, my baby — you may think I am joking or partial, but I am not — she has more human expression than any baby I ever saw! She really looks smart!" And I laughed. But Bill said, "Sure enough! I am not joking! My baby is the most sensible looking baby I ever saw." Of course his baby looked like anybody else's baby, but to him it was different. "My baby wasn't red like the other babies," he said. But his baby was as red as any one's. "Most babies don't have any shape to their face," he went on, "but my baby is different."

The first baby — there is a glory about the first baby. There is always a freshness about the first things.

There is the glory of young fresh love. I want to say this to you young people, and I say it to the boys as well as to the girls. I would keep myself so that when there came a time of true love, when there came into my life my prince charming riding on a white horse with a plume in his hat, I would keep myself so that when I gave myself to him, I could know I was giving him my first love. If you young men ever expect a good girl to respect you and love you, I would say, "I will keep myself pure." There is a sweetness in the first love, isn't there? I didn't mean to tell this, but my wife said she could tell the first time I ever kissed her that I was inexperienced and awkward! That was because I didn't know enough to keep my nose out of the way; I had rather go at this business with the freshness of the first love, hadn't you?

And God wants the first, too. And girls, if that man is going to love you and respect you, and if you are to be the mother of his children, he wants you not to be soiled. He doesn't want you to be already handled, slightly reduced in price because you are shopworn. Freshness and sweetness and joy ought to be that of any woman whose marriage is true. You ought to be able to offer the sweetest of the first love. The first things are always sweet!

I can remember when God called me to preach. I marvel that He ever called me. I said, "Lord, I don't know whether I can preach or not." I hesitated and held back and prayed and said, "Lord, I will try. If anybody is saved I will know it is all right and will praise the Lord." I preached the first time one Friday night in Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. And some people were saved! There was a glow in my heart — this was a seal on my ministry! Then I gave up my work in the University of Chicago and came back to Texas and held

my first revival! I have had many revivals since that time with many more people saved — there were twenty-four saved in that first revival. But what joy I had in that meeting! It was in a little brush arbor, about the size of two of these sections, not wider than from here out to there (pointing to posts in auditorium). But, oh, I can remember that first revival! I can remember most of those who were saved. I remember the songs that were sung and the people that came. Oh, the freshness and sweetness of that first revival! I thought, "Isn't it glorious to be a preacher?" Oh, the first things! The first things! God wants the first! I have built a number of tabernacles, but the truth of the matter is, I sometimes go over to Ft. Worth and see that old lopsided tabernacle in North Ft. Worth. It wasn't very carefully put together. The rafters were not notched in on the wall. I didn't know so much about how to do it, but that was my tabernacle, and, oh, the joy of building the first one!

And then the first church. I remember how, with fear and trembling at Decatur we decided to organize a new Baptist church. It was the first time I had ever organized a church. We started with an independent revival. God blessed and prospered it, and many souls were saved. There were some wonderful things about it.

I remember the first time I was pastor of a full-time church. Oh, the sweetness of it, the joy of it! Wasn't I getting to be somebody?

The Lord wants the first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," the Scripture says.

God wants the freshness of the first. He demands it. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." God wants the FIRST.

The Firstfruits Belong to God

Now in the Old Testament we go back and find where God demanded the firstfruits. Turn with me to Exodus the twenty-second chapter, verse twenty-nine.

"Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors (that is, grapejuice): the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me."

And verse thirty:

"Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me."

God says, "Don't make any delay about it. Give me the first of thy ripe fruits."

I can remember when I was first in love. In the spring I would watch for the first ripe peaches. All you have to do these days is go to the store and get fresh fruits. But in those days I can remember — can you remember the first mess of greens you got out of the garden? Oh, wasn't it good? You remember the first time the green onions and radishes, and lettuce (not lettuce like we get today, but the lettuce that spreads out — and you cut it up and put on it a dressing made with cream) — do you remember how good the first ones were? In the springtime the doctors say, "Well, what you need is a good tonic. Just as soon as the garden sass begins to come in, you will be all right." I remember when I was in love. Love is a strange thing — there is something in the heart of a boy that makes him love a girl — I am talking about real love with respect and not some foolish, wicked thing.

I remember how when the peaches began to get ripe I would watch them. I wanted my girl to have the first ones. I remember so well the first roses that bloomed. I picked them, and took them to my girl who is now my wife.

Can you remember the first watermelons that got ripe — how

good they were? Do you remember as a boy when out in the cane patch, the tassels began to turn on the cane then you knew it was sweet. God said, "When the fruit begins to get ripe, take the first ripe fruits and do not delay to bring them to me." You may think God would want a man to take the first for his family. But, no, God says, "The first belongs to me — the first of the fruits, the first of the grapejuice, the first of all you have, the first of your crops, the first of your cattle, the first of your sheep — give the FIRST. That is what God demands and insists upon. Exodus 23:19 says the same thing.

"The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God."

God says He wants the very first of the firstfruits.

"Wouldn't it be all right to feed my cattle some of this grain first?" Wouldn't it be all right for me to pull the first sheaf for myself?"

"No," God says. "Wouldn't it be all right to pull the first melons and cut them for company and kin-folks?" No, the first of the firstfruits belongs to the Lord.

Maybe you haven't yet counted what it costs to be a Christian, what it costs to have victory over sin, what it costs to have power with God and man. You will have to go back and put first things first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," the Scripture says. Turn to the eighteenth chapter of Numbers and verse twelve and following:

"All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee."

(He is talking to the Levites and priests).

"13. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it."

"14. Everything devoted in Israel shall be thine."

"15. Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine; nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem."

"16. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs."

"17. But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the Lord."

The very first of the ripe fruits, the very first of all grain, and the firstborn are the Lord's.

We read in another place in Leviticus when the grain begins to get ripe in the spring or early summer, you are to bring the wave-sheaf into the Temple. When you glean the ears of corn, take the first sheaf and bring them in and wave them before the Lord before the altar. Before you take any for yourself bring it to the priest and offer it to God. God wants the first. My people, don't fool yourself and say that is Old Testament law. Don't fool yourself and say that is not for us. God was driving hard to get a lesson on the hearts of the people. Nobody can ever get along with God who doesn't accept His right to the first and best. He has a right to it. He demands that we bring Him the firstfruits. You say that is ceremonial law. But God didn't change when the law changed. He demands the first-

fruits. In Proverbs 3:9, 10, He says,

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

"So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

Now God says, "I will bless you. I will give you your crop and your cattle, but you give me the first part." That theme goes all the way through the Bible.

Do you remember how Elijah came to the poor widow? She was picking up sticks to build a little fire. It wouldn't take much, just a little, for she only had a handful of meal and a little oil. She said she was going to make a little cake for herself and for her boy and eat that and die. But Elijah said to her, "Make me a cake first." She might have thought, "Well of all things, talk about selfish preachers! I never saw a preacher quite so selfish as Elijah!" Here was a poor widow making her last cake, and was going to eat it and then expected to die. She just had a little handful of meal left and just enough oil to make one cake. And yet Elijah said, "Make me a cake first." Was he not hard on that widow? No, he wasn't. For when she made Elijah the cake first, she had plenty left. They had some more then for breakfast and dinner and the barrel never did give out. There was always plenty of oil and always plenty of meal.

"Give me the firstfruits," God says. "Make that cake and give me the firstfruits." Many a barrel of meal has gone dry because God's part wasn't taken out first. Many a cruse of oil has gone dry because we didn't take the Lord's part out first. And many a cow was barren and didn't bring the calf because you didn't give God the first calf that came.

You wouldn't put everybody before God — it is just your wife, or your children. But God wants the first, and the best of the first, the first of the firstfruits, and the best of the firstfruits. God demands the best. You may feel that is exorbitant and unreasonable and you can't do it. All right, but don't argue with God about it. Either say, "I will put God first," or say, "I won't." The subject this morning is, "God — First or Second?" Everybody feels that nobody would put God last, that everybody loves God to some extent. It is not a question of whether you put God last or not. Nobody wants to put God last. But you have a temptation to put Him after your business, or after your wife or your children and a few other things. It is not even a question of whether you are going to put Him before the first things, but whether you will put Him before the first of the first things and the best of the best. That is what He demands and He has a right to it, "the first of the firstfruits."

God Is Jealous

Back in the Ten Commandments, the Lord said,

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exo. 20:4, 5).

God is jealous. God is not willing to be second to anybody, and He has no right to be second to anybody and ought not to be second to anybody. Your family has no business coming between you and God. God has a right to the first and the best of the best, the first of the firstfruits, as He said. That is what God requires and demands and insists upon.

I read you in Numbers, eighteen, beginning with verse twelve. What did He say?

"All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee."

"And whatsoever is first ripe in

the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it."

"Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine."

"Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of men shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem."

"And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs."

"But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the Lord."

"And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave-breast and as the right shoulder are thine."

"All the heave-offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee."

"And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."

"And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance."

You may say, "Well, Brother Rice, now here, I don't believe in bringing in all the first fruits!" But the Lord commands, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Yes, that is the way.

Pay the Tithe First

You want to tithe. You say, "I will tithe after I pay my other bills, so as to keep my good name, and then if I have any left, I will tithe." Or somebody says, "When I get my grocery bill paid, I will tithe." I say, if you are going to please God, He demands the first, the first of your money. Somebody says, "Well, Brother Rice, we would surely not be required to tithe when we can't pay our bills." But I Corinthians 16:2 says:

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

You feel that you owe so much that you owe so many people, but you don't owe anybody as much as you owe God.

I received one of the saddest letters the other day from Seagraves, Texas. I will not read the name but will read the rest of it.

"Dear Brother Rice:

"I read your powerful sermon on 'Hidden Sins.' I think it the strongest I ever read... It seems like it was all for me. I am guilty of all the charges you made. I am penniless and friendless on account of hiding the wedge in my tent. Time and again I have promised the Lord a tenth and when He would let me prosper, I kept it all! I have lied and robbed God! At last, He has collected all! I pray the Lord to ever keep you humble and bold to preach the truth. That is what the world needs. A very few preachers now that will preach it that way. Pray that I may rededicate my life and all to the cause of our dear Lord. I have been greatly blessed from the good sermons you write..."

"Find enclosed \$1.00. Use it any way you see fit."

"At last, He has collected all!"

That is the point I want you to

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THE SWORD OF THE LORD
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Entered as second-class matter,
July 13, 1935, at the post office at
Dallas, Texas, under the Act of
March 3, 1897.

JOHN R. RICE, EDITOR, Pastor of
Fundamental Baptist Church

Published Weekly at 201 East 10th
Street, Dallas, Texas

Subscription price, 50 cents per yr.
Advertising Rates on Request

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"CHRIST --- FIRST OR SECOND?"

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

get. He said, "I am guilty of all the charges you made. I am penniless and friendless on account of hiding the wedge in my tent. Time and again I have promised the Lord a tenth, and when He would let me prosper, I kept it all!" And then again, "At last He has collected all!" Now, brother, don't you think you can get by. God is a jealous God. God doesn't need your money. He doesn't need anything you have. He doesn't need you, but He wants your love. He wants to be first. He has a right to be first. If you don't put Him first, He will not be close to you. He will not bless you and prosper you. He demands to be first. He has a right to be first in money matters. I only begin on that because God began on that. That isn't the end of it, but the beginning. If you don't put God first in things that come to your hand, if you do not put Him first in money matters, if you do not put Him first in house and first in field and first in fruits, — if you do not put God first in that, you are going to fall short and miss your blessing. I want my people to tithe, but that is not the thing I want. I want you to love God first and put Him first in your heart. That thing is important for your own sake. If you don't you will be saying like that man who wrote me, "I have lied to God and robbed God. I am friendless and penniless. At last, He has collected all." Now I tell you, you can't get along with God and make Him a secondary matter and use Him as a tool, just an incident to prosper you and take care of you. You must put God first. He wants the first and the best. He demands it. He has a right to it. He is a jealous God.

The Firstborn Are the Lord's

And not only the firstfruits but the firstborn belong to God. There are many Scriptures on that. Turn to Exodus the thirteenth chapter, verses one and two.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."

God doesn't say, "You ought to give it to me." He says, "It is mine, set it apart. It is already mine. You just sanctify it. It is holy. You dedicate it, it is mine."

"Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

(Don't forget, God set this day apart because you are His).

"For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place:"

And further down in the same chapter, verse ten, the Lord says, "Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."

"And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,

"That thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's."

"And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck; and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."

It isn't yours. If you can't pay for it, don't use it. If you can't pay for it, break its neck. It is God's not yours.

"And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage."

When your boy says, "What is this? What do you mean by bringing in the tithe?" Then you shall tell him that the first money that comes in has to be the Lord's.

"And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage."

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem."

"And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt."

So my friends, it isn't just the matter of money, but it is a token between you and God that you love Him first, that you love God best and first of all, and that all you have is His. God demands the firstfruits and the firstborn.

How dear my children are to me! You heard them sing on the radio this morning. They sing, but I don't let them sing publicly very much. I try not to be foolish about them. People spoil preacher's children anyway. I was so proud of them and I enjoyed so much having them with me on the radio and having them sing. I could not realize what it meant, but when my baby, Grace, was born, the first one, and they laid her in my arms, (the plump little thing!) I knew I took then not just a little body but an immortal soul for Heaven or Hell. I looked down upon her and begged God to make me fit to be her father. I thanked God that she was well formed and had no disease. We gave her to the Lord that day, my wife and I, and we prayed God to take her and use her. How glad I was when she was saved! Through the years I have dreamed she would be my helper and play the piano for me and be my secretary. And so it was about the other children. But God said, "I want the first baby

that is born. The firstborn among the cattle is mine. The first calf from every cow, being male, the first sheep, the first male lamb and the first of every kind of beast, clean and unclean, is mine." If it is the firstling of an ass, you are not to offer it as a sacrifice, but you must pay a lamb for it. Every unclean beast you are to redeem with a lamb. If you don't have a lamb, then break the donkey's neck. It is not yours. You can't have it unless you buy it. The same way about your children. If some of you are having trouble about your children, and they are a burden to you, if you would really turn them over to the Lord and say they are His, then He will take them and use them for Himself. If you could say they were His altogether, a lot would be settled. God would take them in charge. And God would bless them in it. I haven't any boys to be preachers. I have thought of it many times. If my six girls were all boys, I think I would want every one of them to be a preacher. I guess I would have been so vain and so proud that maybe God saw I had better not have any. I don't think it is such a curse to have girls though. I am very well satisfied about that. But I would like to have had boys to preach the gospel. If God wants my girls to be preacher's wives or missionaries' wives and go to Africa or China — if He wants the first, He has a right to it. The first are the Lord's. He wants the first of animals. He wants the firstborn son, and you ought to give it to Him and I ought to give it to Him. If that seems hard to you, then remember that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." He gave His firstborn. We shouldn't be afraid or shouldn't hold back on giving Him the first.

The First Day

God also wants the first day. That is mentioned in I Corinthians 16:2:

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

You know, the Old Testament Sabbath came on the seventh day. The point was this: we will give the Lord the seventh day a picture of rest, a picture of Heaven when you have earned it. One must work the first day, and the second day, work number three, work number four, work on the fifth day, work on the sixth day — now then you have earned your rest. Now you can have rest. But that leaves God out, that makes salvation by works. That pictures a type of salvation by your own good deeds. Nobody was ever saved that way. There was nothing wrong with that, but through the wickedness of sinful men it failed. Nobody ever got any real rest or peace in his heart because he worked. Nobody ever got to Heaven because he earned it. But since the law failed to save, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Now that Christ has died, what do I do? Praise the Lord, on the very first day of the week Jesus arose from the dead, so I enter into rest! That isn't fair having a rest before you work! But that is right! You rest before you do anything at all! I have peace in my heart, I have ceased from my own works before I ever started any works, and I have trusted in Christ for peace and salvation, and I have Heaven here! I am going to Heaven resting! I am resting my way to Heaven. I have entered into rest, and the first day of the week belongs to God. The old Testament says about the Jewish Sabbath.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

That is the Old Testament Sabbath, but turn to the New Testament and it the Lord's day. I start out preaching and working on the first day for the Lord. But I already have peace in my heart. I give the Lord the first day. The Lord's Day is on Sunday, the first day. Would you want to wait until the last day of the week to serve God? No! No! Today is the first day of the week. Today is a new beginning, a new dedication. I take out what money belongs to the

Lord on the first day as the Scripture said. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Then you pay the rest of your bills on Monday. But take the Lord's part out today. It comes first. It is the first day that God wants. Let's put Jesus first.

A lot of people say, "I have to go see my mother." Well, go on your time then. Don't go on the Lord's time. You say, "I want to have a little recreation." Then take it on your day. Don't take it on God's day. Or some one says, "But I have to have a certain amount of sleep. I am tired and need to catch up on my sleep." All right, but don't take it all out on God because this day is the Lord's day. That is what the Bible called it. God wants the first day of the week. It belongs to Him. All the days belong to Him but this is a type, a token, an evidence that your heart puts Him first. That is why Christians ought to be faithful to attend services. You ought to be glad to be in Sunday School and to attend prayer meeting, to go to the parks and jails for services and win souls. You ought to be a lot more tired on Monday morning starting your work than you are Sunday morning. You ought to give the Lord the freshest and the best. You ought to say, "I will lay myself out for Jesus."

I like to have half a day off on Saturday so I can get a little rest and then hit the ball Sunday morning for the Lord. It is the Lord's day, put Him first. The Sabbath, the Old Testament day of rest, came after six days of work, but Sunday, the first day is a picture that we have already entered into rest. Let us put Him first.

God Wants to Be First Every Day

God not only wants the firstfruits and the firstborn and the first day, but He wants the first place in your heart, the first place in your life. He wants the first part in every day. Did you read in the Sunday School lesson this morning how the Lord Jesus arose "a great while before day . . . and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed?" I set the alarm this morning at 6:30, but a good while before that time I was awake and felt some way the quiet call, and I got up and got my Bible, and in my heart I was saying, "Oh God, I don't want to preach about the thing and not have it so myself." I want to be like I am telling others to be. My constant prayer for the last few days as I tried to get ready to preach this sermon was, "Oh, Lord Jesus, be first to me." And I just wonder how many in this group every day, the first part of the day, you put Him first? When do you read your Bible? Do you read it at night? That is a good time all right. Do you read it some other time of the day? Or do you read your Bible the first thing in the morning? If Jesus, early in the morning a great while before day, rose up and went into a solitary place and prayed—don't you think that would be a good thing for us?

You want to know the secret of D. L. Moody's life. He made up his mind, he said, "If I am going to be much preacher, I must learn the Bible and learn to pray." All his life long he got up at 5:00 in the morning (sometimes at 4:00) and spent a couple of hours alone with his Bible and God before others got up.

If we learn to give God the first thoughts and the first plans and the first devotions of the day, some way the day is better.

I went through a day not long ago and my burdens got heavy. Oh, the burdens! You have no idea the burdens, the details, the bills to pay, all this Sunday School to see after. Other preachers have an educational director, other preachers don't have a paper to edit. There are so many things piling up. And along in the middle of the afternoon they were getting too heavy. I didn't understand. And something said, "You were so busy today, that is the trouble. You were so busy you didn't take time out and have it all settled and God's smile on it and your heart all cleaned up anew before you began." That is the reason I had a hard time today.

Luther, a great preacher, said, "My work is so heavy I have to pray at least three hours a day.

If I don't I can't get it all done." We leave off praying and think that will give us more time but it doesn't. Praying gives more time. It never gives you more time to leave off praying. It never gives you more money to leave off tithing. It does not make you any more rested when you take the Lord's time for it. The thing you ought to do is to say, "I am going to give Him the first and He will make the rest of it go farther."

Let's give Him the first part of the day. I wonder right this morning, doesn't God speak and say, "Give me the quiet hour in the first part of the day. Go alone, and there read the Bible and meditate and pray. Lay everything on the altar afresh. Your sins will have to be confessed again. You have a fresher mind in the morning. It is clearer in the morning."

I used to work on arithmetic problems and I couldn't get them. Then I would wake up in the morning early. I think they must have been settled in my sleep. I would get up and work them right out. God gives you a fresher mind in the morning. Your heart is clearer and happy in the morning. How sweet that God gives us sleep. "He giveth his beloved sleep," the Scripture says. Isn't God good to refresh us? That fresh part, that best part — give it to God. It is His. Put Him first.

You say, "Brother Rice, I can't remember the Bible like I used to." Do you know why? You read it at night when you are tired. You put it last. After you have read other things you read the Bible. After the dishes are washed and you have put the children to bed, you take your Bible and read a little. You have the place marked and say, "Where did I read last night?" You don't know where. "I can't remember where I read." No, I know you can't. The reason is this: You are giving God the tail end of everything. Your mind is crowded and tired. As a matter of duty you read it. Sometimes you go to sleep while reading. You read over a whole page and go back and read it again and wonder what you read. "Well, I must have read that," you say. The trouble is, you didn't put God first in the freshest part of the day. He demands the first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

God Demands the First Love

God wants the firstfruits, the firstborn and the first day, the first part of the day and then the first love. In the Second chapter of Revelation God gave a message to the seven churches of Asia, and to the church of Ephesus He said:

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Make thy petition deep,
O heart of mine,
Thy God can do much more
Than thou canst ask;
Launch out on the Divine,
Draw from His love-filled store.
Trust Him with everything;
Begin today,
And find the joy that comes
When Jesus has His way!
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"CHRIST --- FIRST OR SECOND?"

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Now it used to be I thought that first love meant to go back to the joy and zeal one had when he was first converted. I think that is true, but I think what God likes about that first love is that God was loved first in it. That is the point. Many a man here today loves his wife as much as he did back yonder. But this is the difference. Insensibly other things have stolen in between to occupy your mind. You still love her, but your attention has been given to other things. You love her, but you may love something else better. It is not enough to love your wife second to other women. That won't do. You say, "God, I will put you second. I will put you right after my business or my wife or right after the baby." But God doesn't want second place. He wants the first love. And He said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." I love Him today. God sees my heart and knows I love Him. He knows you love Him, too, but that is not the question. Is He second or first this morning? Does He have the first love, the first of all? Can you say with the words of the old song:

"The dearest idol I have known,
What e'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from thy throne
And worship only thee."

You need to put Him first this morning. The secret back of the matter of tithing is, it is not your money God wants — God wants your love, the first love. He has a right to that. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

I tell you about you Sunday School teachers — many of you are growing in grace. Bless your

hearts, forgive me if sometimes I talk sharply. I don't mean to. I do appreciate the work you are doing. Sunday School teachers and officers, you think sometimes your burdens are heavy. "I have to go see all my absentees," you say, and sometimes you don't have a car, and you have to have this, that and the other, and you think you can't do it. You think too much of a burden to come to the teacher's meetings, to give up other things. But you wouldn't think it was too much if you ever got it settled that He is to have the first place.

When Elijah, that man of God, said to the widow when she just had a little meal, "Make me a cake first, and out of what you have left, you may eat. You and the starving boy be second." She might have said, "That is too much to ask. A preacher shouldn't ask that. You shouldn't ask that of a widow woman." But when she put the Lord first through His prophet, she had plenty left. Last Sunday morning a woman trusted Christ in my Sunday School class. I don't know whether she had ever made a start or not. But she stood to claim Christ as her Saviour. And Mrs. McBeth came to me to tell me about a girl saved in her class and then somebody else told me of a conversion in the Sunday School. There were four saved in Sunday School last Sunday. What little visiting you did, what did it matter? What little time you spent, what did it matter if we had four people saved in the Sunday School last Sunday? That is worth all the visiting. You get things out of proportion. When you put Him first, it pays.

It pays to serve Jesus,

It pays every day,

It pays every step of the way;

Thou, the pathway to glory

May sometimes be drear,

You'll be happy each step of the way.

Let's learn to put Him first and give Him the best. I know it may take you away from your family and your husband doesn't like for you to leave the beds unmade. Two or three women told me, "Well, I feel I can't neglect my home." Another woman said, "My health and my children getting out of school in the afternoon, I can't do it."

"I am not very strong and I have to ride the streetcar to see every one of my pupils. If you would just remember that it isn't for the church primarily, it isn't for the preacher, it is for Jesus, and you ought to put Him first, it wouldn't seem too much. You ought to say, 'Lord Jesus, my day belongs to you.' It doesn't belong to my job."

Brother —, Sears Roebuck didn't die for you. Your job isn't first. Let's put first things first. Consumers Plumbing didn't die for you, Brother —. They pay you for a little bit of work but what about your heart and soul? They don't have eternity for you. They didn't prepare Heaven for you. It is right for you to make a good hand, but, Brother —, Western Auto didn't die for you. Somebody must hold first place.

I would put Jesus Christ first and say, "The Lord Jesus is going to be first in my life."

Give Him the firstfruit, the firstborn, the first day, the first time of the day and seek first His kingdom. There is a song that says:

Early let us seek Thy favor,

Early let us do Thy will;

Blessed Lord and only Saviour,

With Thy love our bosoms

fill;

Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,

Thou hast loved us, love us

still.

Oh, if God would put it in our hearts to put Him first, all our problems would be solved. We would have all the Sunday School teachers we need. One of the superintendents said he needed a couple more teachers. There are plenty of folks to teach, but the trouble is that Machinery Sales and Supply is first or Atlanta-Cunningham Cycle Shop is first or somebody else is first. I am pick-out the folks who are not teaching. I mention these two for illustrations. I am as certain as I am living that God has all the workers we need. All the work could be done and done right. The

only trouble is that some cheat God and don't give Him first place. Plenty of folks can teach, and plenty are called to teach, and plenty are anointed to teach, and some have taught with great blessing. If we would put God first, we would have all the teachers we need. If people would do this, we would have all the singers, all the personal workers, all the money we need. All God wants is the first place, and that means everything. He has a right to it. He will prosper the rest of it. Who are you to leave God out? You can't work for God, you don't know how or you haven't time. But wait, God says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Christ Or Self?

But this is what is the matter. Today if it isn't Jesus first, it is self. You say it is your job, or your family, or your health. It isn't that. It is self first — what I like, what I enjoy. Come off that throne, you imposter, you have no right there. That is the throne for Jesus Christ. I say, step down out of that place of authority. It isn't yours. You are bought with a price.

When you were baptized, when you went down into the watery grave, you said, "Jesus died for me, so I die to myself. My sins are buried and the old sinner is dead." And when you came out of the water you said to the world, "Jesus rose again. My old sins are nailed to the cross with Him and now I am living for Jesus. Christ lives in me. All my thoughts and actions are His. He is raised from the dead and lives in me." Christ in you the hope of glory, the Scripture says, so then "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin."

Some of you use that strong right hand. You hold the hammer and the saw. Go ahead, but I want you to know that that right hand is bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. You can talk with that tongue, but you had better beware, that tongue is bought by Jesus Christ. Be careful about the scenes you look upon with those eyes — they are His, not yours. Beware what you hear, because those ears belong to Jesus Christ. Some of you listen to that rotten stuff on the radio. Some songs are a shame and disgrace. Your ears belong to God. Take heed what you listen to. No wonder the Scripture says, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." If that hand doesn't serve God then you are a cheat, you lied to God when you made a public profession and was baptized and joined the church. You are a cheat and an imposter if you take what is not yours. You are sitting on the throne that belongs to Jesus Christ. Get off today and put Him first. It is Christ or self. A little poem says:

"When Christ is on the throne,

Self is on the cross,

When self is on the throne,

Christ is on the cross."

Jesus said,

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

We ought to have a purging in this church, a searching of our hearts. We ought to face this thing fair and square and say, "All right, I will put God first," or you ought to say, "No, I am not going to give up my way. I am not going to give God the first meal out of the barrel. I can't give God the first. I am not going to give God the tithe. My wife and I do not have enough as it is. I can't give God the first day when it is my only day of recreation and the only day to visit with my family. I won't give God the first of my children, the first of my time, the first of my heart." "No," you say, "that is too much." I would like to have a purging here this morning. It would be better if some would say, "I don't like it, I will go some place else." We would get somewhere for God if half of the crowd would leave and go some other place, saying, "That is too strict for me. I can't stand that. That is asking too much," and if those left here would say, "Oh Lord Jesus, take me, I am bought with a price, I am not my own.

I don't belong to myself. My hands are not mine, my money is not mine, my family is not mine, my time not mine. Take me, Lord Jesus. Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. Take my voice, and let me sing, always, only, for my King. Take me, Lord Jesus." Yes, that would be better. We need a purging. There are those who count the cost and find it too much, and say, "I will not do it." Let us search our hearts this morning.

One man said, "Lord, let me follow You." Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Another man said, "Lord, I will follow you after I go bury my father." The Lord said, "Let the dead bury their dead." Jesus said, "If anybody follows me, let him sit down first and count the cost and see whether it is too much." Brother, let's count the cost today. Is it too much when Christ died for you, when He kept you out of Hell? Is it too much after what He gave you? Is it too much? Oh, Lord, take the first of my time, the best of my talents, whatever it is. Lord, my friendships and my love and my heart's devotion, Lord, take the first love, the first place, take the first day, and the first time of the day. Let me seek first the kingdom of God. Can you say that today? You ought to say it and you had better say it. You can't have victory without it. It is self or the Lord today. Let's put first things first. He that is first will be last. If you put yourself first, you will come out last. I read you that sad letter where the man said, "I have hid the wedge in my tent and now I am friendless and penniless. I have robbed God and lied to God and now at last He has taken all." My friends, He loved you so that He gave His first.

When you bring God the firstfruits, God will bless the rest of it. When you bring the first offering, "your barns shall be filled with plenty and your presses shall burst out with new wine." He always pays back more than you give. Seek first His kingdom. Today put Him first. Maybe somebody here today is not a Christian. If so, I am sorry. If you are not a Christian I know what is your trouble. You don't want to put Him first. You want your own way, your own stubborn, wicked way. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of death," the Scripture says. It may look beautiful but it doesn't turn out that way. No, it doesn't. You had better turn.

A young woman came, crying and weeping and said, "What shall I do? I don't know what to do. I didn't dream when my mother told me not to go to that country club dance — I didn't dream it would turn out this way." No, and nobody ever dreamed sin would turn out like that, but it does. Adam didn't believe it. Eve didn't believe it when the Lord said, "Thou shalt surely die." Self means ruin, poverty, heartbreak. I wouldn't go the selfish way. I would say, "Today, come in, Lord Jesus, take charge of my life. You can have the first today."

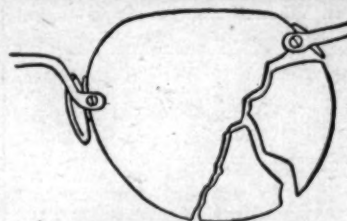
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